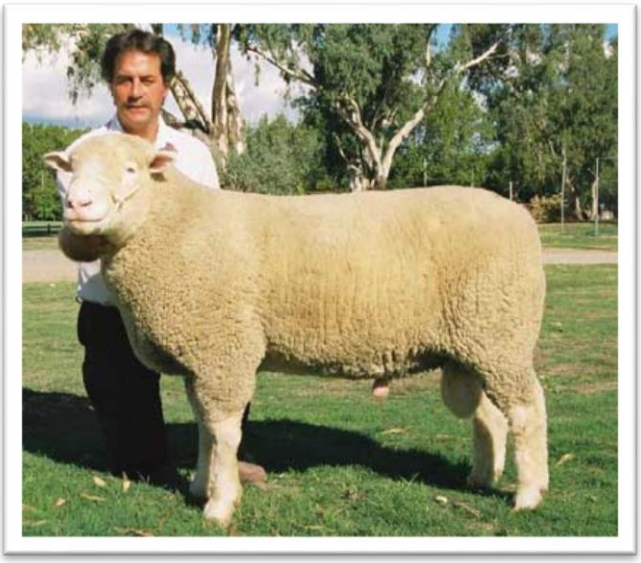
Sheep Artificial Insemination Fact Sheet 1:

Pros and Cons of AI Breeding Sheep

Benefits of AI Breeding

- It is a way to get genetics into your flock that you couldn't get otherwise. There is potential to bring in genetics from countries that do not allow live sheep exportation.

- Fewer biosecurity risks because you are not bringing a live ram into your flock.



Ram used for CCE AI clinic

- You can use AI selectively by breeding your best ewes to new genetics and then using a ram lamb if one is born. Or you could work with another producer so you can make a genetically superior ram lamb for each other.

- You can potentially select for specific traits you wish to have in your herd.

Lambs born from AI breeding

- Combined with progeny testing it has potential to improve consistency of lambs marketed for meat as demonstrated in countries like France.

Negatives of AI Breeding

- Could be expensive because of the time and money spent to synchronize ewes and progeny testing of rams. Laparoscopic AI is expensive because of the equipment and expertise needed. Fresh semen vaginal AI is less expensive.

- A strategy to get the most benefit out of using AI is needed. For example, using AI on the whole flock or selective mating within the flock.

- Conception rate is lower than with natural breeding so you still need a cleanup ram to catch ewes that did not conceive through AI breeding.

- Time consuming/takes planning.

- Requires detailed and accurate documentation and timing of procedures to maximize accuracy and success.

Ram lambs born from AI breeding

- Few rams available in the USA that are proven for production traits.

- The regulation on importing semen from Europe and other countries vary so it is not always possible to get imported semen and there is not much selection in the USA.

- Semen Quality (volume, concentration, morphology, motility) limits the number of ewes able to be inseminated per ejaculate. Don't assume one ram will extend to cover 20 to 30 ewes – it could be 4 to 6.

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